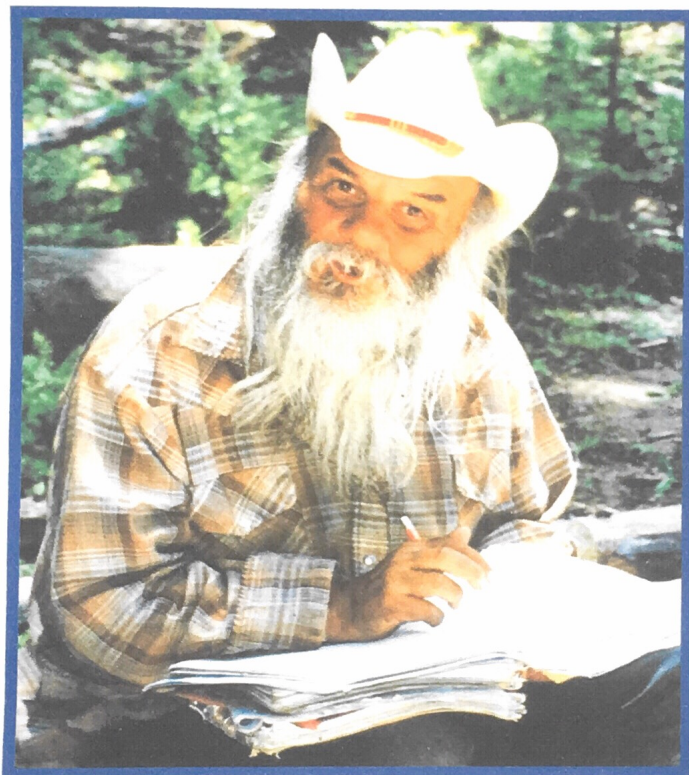




# Rainbow Family

## Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.  
Scanned in 2018.  
Jodey Bateman may be  
contacted on Facebook.*

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EXCERPTS FROM: "Final Report  
1978 Rainbow Family"  
Healing Gathering.  
USDA Forest Service  
Region 6

Umpqua National Forest, OR  
- prepared by Dennis W. Martin, District Ranger  
Oct. 30, 1978

6 pages

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Excerpts from: Final Report  
1978 Rainbow Family Healing Gathering  
 USDA Forest Service

Region 6  
 Wimpqua National Forest [Oregon]  
 Prepared by Dennis W. Martin, District Ranger Oct. 30, 1978

[All Rainbow Gatherings are held in national forests and involve negotiations with the Forest Service, although the family no longer gets permits as they did in '78. Here is a forest ranger's view of Rainbow] 1978

## ... VI WORKING WITH THE FAMILY

Although in some ways working with the Family is no different than working with any other permittee, there are some characteristics that may vary from the norm. The first point that should be remembered is that many of the Family members have a basic distrust of "the bureaucracy" and do not expect most agency personnel to level with them. Based on some of their experiences, this may very well be warranted. However, initially they do have a tendency not to level with agency personnel and may evade certain issues. As a consequence, one of the first obstacles to overcome is this lack of trust.

### Organization

When working with the Family it is important to keep in mind that their "organization" is quite democratic in nature and no chain of command exists and no one person is going to "give the orders." Generally decisions are group decisions and will only be implemented by those who are committed to that decision. However there are specific individuals who accept more responsibility than others, and once permit administrators can identify them, they are generally the ones that can be counted on to get things done. The interesting thing is that during the course of the Gathering, different individuals keep appearing who fit this category and the ones that were responding may move out of the picture for a while, and someone else will assume their responsibilities.

### Operational Procedures



Another, sometimes frustrating characteristic is the tendency to let each person attending the Gathering "do their own thing." An example of this might be in attempting to gain permit compliance regarding permitted parking, and if someone decides to park in a manner not appropriate to the parking plan, those administering the parking lot will frequently make either no, or at best, a weak attempt to correct the situation. On the other hand, if the actions of one or two individuals are having an adverse effect on other Family members, the action taken can be very swift and quite severe.

There is a tendency in the Family Council to appear slow in responding to administrative requests for permit compliance. However if the request is made in a reasonable manner, they will respond within an appropriate time frame. In very few instances were there any problems in getting permit compliance right up to the end of the Gathering in mid-July.

### General Characteristics and Group Composition

There are some general characteristics that appear to be common to many of the people who are involved in the Gathering that present both opportunities and problems. A number are very much aware of what the Forest Service is doing in terms of management practices and are in disagreement with many of these such as herbicide use and clearcutting. On the other hand, these same people seem to be sincerely interested in finding out why certain things are done, which provides a good opportunity for agency personnel to informally discuss "why we do what we do," and the rationale for some of these practices. On the other hand, it is also an excellent chance for these same agency personnel to listen and become more aware of why these people feel as they do. On the opposite end of the continuum there are a number of people participating in the Gathering who apparently live in urban areas and who have no concept at all of what a national forest is, what a clearcut looks like or even that they are on public land. Again there's some good I and E [Information and Education] potential



here. Lastly there is a small group of people who do not even fit on the continuum that are strictly out for themselves and have no apparent concerns beyond that point. It is with this group that the most significant problems will occur.

For those administering the permit, they initially should keep in mind that in general the Family is definitely "counter-culture" and to anticipate actions that are not in keeping with those normally encountered. For instance, nudity is looked upon completely differently and without the sexual connotation that is generally accepted and the administrative people should be able to deal with this in a positive manner. Along the same line, many of the people are refreshingly honest and very open with their emotions, and for those involved in the 1978 Gathering, it was a rewarding experience in many ways to establish the contacts that were made. A last characteristic to keep in mind is that there are a number of different "families" involved in the Rainbow Family Gathering and each has its own identity, organization and culture and each may have to be dealt with separately in respect to gaining permit compliance. The Rainbow Family is in effect only the sponsor and the organizing entity.

### Internal Family Administration

Internally the Family does a good job in disseminating information pertinent to minimizing resource impacts and generally informing participants of what to expect in terms of facilities, opportunities, potential problems and in clarifying individual expectations. On the other hand, they do not do as good a job in terms of follow-up, but this is to be expected because of the type of organization that was discussed earlier.

A welcome center was originally established along the Black Rock trail near the main meadow where participants were given information on what to expect and reminded of some of the things they should do and might be aware of. As the parking lot situation changed near the 4th of July weekend, another welcome center was established near the gate on the east side of the Gathering site.

One of the most heavily used areas was the information center



located near the center of activities along the north side of Black Rock meadow. Here participants could post messages and obtain information on everything from the weather forecast to the next food run.

### The Council

Councils were held daily, providing a forum for Family members to discuss their individual concerns, to establish work priorities and to just maintain a daily communication link throughout the Gathering site. Initially, it was felt, that this would be a good way for Forest Service administrative personnel to deal with general concerns, but as it turned out, this was more effectively dealt with one-on-one with the core group.

### VII RESOURCE IMPACTS

Initially, this is the area that generated the greatest Forest Service concern when the Gathering was proposed by the Family. The question was "what kind of impact on a mountain meadow area are 5,000 people going to have" or more realistically, 15,000 people. ... It appeared that the action would not result in irretrievable damage to the resource. In short, this analysis proved to be correct, even though there was some short term degradation anticipated.

### Facilities Locations

The operations plan called for designation of trails within the meadow prior to the start of the Gathering, as were the tepee circle, kitchens, latrines, information center, sweat, "kiddle city" and general camping areas. In general, the plan developed by the Family was quite good and most facilities located more or less where they were planned with the exception of the trails. As a result, there was probably more damage associated with poor trail location than from any other facility generally in terms of excessive disturbance and minor soil erosion. This also created extra work for the Family during rehabilitation.



Individual computers were located generally in the areas planned although there were a few cases where individuals camped too close to the stream and were asked to move. Most complied with this request once the rationale was explained by administrative personnel.

### Domestic Animals

One problem that was not fully considered was family members bringing horses and goats into the meadow even though so much of this had occurred during past gatherings. However, the only significant problems noted were damage to ground cover in the areas where the animals were tethered, and they more than likely contributed to the increased fecal coliform count in Black Rock Creek.

The most significant problem relating to animals were the large number of dogs. Even though the Family discouraged this in the "Howdy Folks" letter and related brochures there were probably a minimum of 500 dogs in the meadow at any one time. Two fears developed. The first one was that they would begin to pack-up and start chasing deer and elk and the second was that they would stay in the meadow after their "masters" left. Fortunately, neither of the fears materialized to the knowledge of the administrators.

### Soil and Water

Probably the most significant problem that occurred was the quality degradation in Black Rock Creek that was attributed to people bathing and swimming in the stream and to a lesser extent in Wolf Lake. Although the Family Council discouraged the use of soap in the streams, just the simple fact that so many people were using such a small stream caused the fecal coliform count to increase dramatically. One of the most significant sources of pollution were the "sweats" that were located near the lower end of Black Rock Meadow and there were some instances of people urinating in or near the different streams, although it was assumed that these were fairly isolated instances. Other sources of pollution included the large number of dogs in the Gathering and to a lesser extent the horses and goats.

Initially, soil compaction was of some concern particularly in the



heavier used areas such as the teepee and council circles and the trails. However, in the study conducted, comparing the difference in compaction prior to the Gathering and that measured when the permit was terminated, it was found that there was no significant difference.

### VIII FOREST SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

There is no doubt that this type of use is costly in terms of both dollars and time. However, if it is equated to a regular recreation workload of a like number of visitor days (approximately 100 to 150 thousand) it is somewhat in line with what might be expected. The initial budget ... estimates a total cost of approximately \$25,000 which included co-operative law enforcement, fire management and permit administration...

[Much of the Forest Service's information, both positive and negative, is simply what their contacts in Rainbow told them about the assets and problems of the gatherings. As Jay Sun says "We said these things and the government copied them down. They're telling our story."

At the Oregon Gathering I was digging a shitter in a clear cut with a member of the Ho-Dads: an organization of co-operative crews who work in the forest as tree planters, thinners, and loggers and divide the money equally. They also campaign for forest policies that take care of the ecology. A forest ranger came up to us and tried to justify the Forest Service policy of allowing clear cuts in the national forests. The Ho-Dad member had evidently had as much experience in the forest as the ranger. He was able to defeat every point the forest ranger tried to make. Finally all the ranger could say was that the only way the lumber companies could make a profit was to clear cut. So much for the "good Information and Education potential" of the Forest Service report.]